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The F.B.I. Will Take a New Look At the King Case

Attorney General Edward Levi has ordered a review of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's inquiry into the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that could lead to a reopening of the case. The object of the review apparently is to discover if the bureau's hostility to Dr. King, as documented in recent Senate testimony, affected the way in which the murder was investigated.

Although supporters of Dr. King

have suggested that the bureau itself might be implicated in his death, the Justice Department seems primarily concerned that the agency may not have fully explored the possibility that James Earl Ray, who was convicted of the murder, was part of a conspiracy to assassinate the civil rights leader.

Two assistant attorneys general will conduct the review by studying bureau and Justice Department files and the Senate testimony. In that testimony, bureau officials acknowledged that for six years they had harassed and attempted to discredit Dr. King because then F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover considered him politically dangerous.

Should a new investigation of the King murder be ordered, it is not clear who would conduct it. The bureau is the Justice Department's main investigative arm.

President Ford has urged that a limited review of the Warren Commission investigation of President Kennedy's assassination be undertaken.